

The Practical Improvement of
Christmas-Day, 17.

A
S E R M O N

Preach'd at the
Reverend Mr. *Shower's*,
IN THE
O L D - J E W R Y,

December the 25th, 1706.

By *BENJAMIN ROBINSON*,
Minister of the Gospel.

L O N D O N :



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Rom. XIV. vi.

He that regards a Day, regards it to the Lord; and he that regards not the Day, to the Lord he does not regard it———

TH E Apostle does, in this Chapter direct Christians how to carry towards each other in reference to the lesser disputable Matters, about which their Sentiments might differ. He begins it thus, *Him that is weak in the Faith, receive ye. Him that is Weak in the Faith, Him whom ye account Weak, Or, tho' he be really so, really weak, and mistaken as to the Matters in Dispute; Yet receive him, but not to doubtful Disputations. Receive him, for God has received him, Ver. 3. &c.* He plainly proceeds upon this Ground, There may be Diversity of Apprehension and Judgement, even, among good Men; *One believes he may eat all Things; Another, who is Weak, eats Herbs, he is almost afraid of every*

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Thing, *Ver. 2. One Man esteems one Day above another, Another esteems every Day alike, Ver. 5.* As to the Days that were peculiarly appointed, either as Fasts, or Feasts, under the *Jewish* Dispensation; some reckon'd themselves by the Authority of a Divine Law, oblig'd to keep up, to continue the Observance of 'em, others were satisfied, that that Law it self was cancell'd and disannull'd, and therefore that they were not at all concern'd to regard or take Notice of them.

Now notwithstanding such Variety of Sentiments as these, and that their Practice was correspondently differing, yet does not the Apostle allow them to *despise*, to treat each other with Contempt and Scorn; or, to cast reproachful Reflections one upon another; much less does he allow them to *Judge* or to Censure each others State God-ward, to pass and pronounce a Sentence of Eternal Death, and Damnation upon each other on the Account of such Differences as these; but he requires, that they *receive* one the other, not only to free and friendly Converses, for the civil Ends and Purposes of Life, to Meet and Trade, and Eat and Drink, and (as there may be Occasion) dwell together; but also does hereby enjoin them to receive one another to *Christian Love*, and Holy Communion in their solemn Assemblies, such Differences as these notwithstanding.

Thus it was directed by the Apostle, when he wrote to these believing *Romans*: and their Differences at that Time, I may venture to pronounce, were at least fully equal to those that do now distinguish the various Communions of Christians amongst us. And particularly, the Contests which now lie between Us and our Conforming Brethren, I cannot reckon to be in themselves of greater Difficulty or Importance, than those that then were between the Judaizing and Gentile Christians: In those Debates, as well as these, there were on the *one Hand*, at least, equal Pretensions to *Decency and Order*; And, more than that, the Appearance of an Express, and Positive Law of God enjoining those

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Rites and Ceremonies, upon which they did so vehemently insist: And on the *other Hand*, there was also then an Apprehension, that the Institutions of Christ were in danger of being Corrupted and Debas'd, and that his Authority would be undermined, if they were Countenanced, and allowed to continue in the Church. Besides, it cannot be more certain now, as to our present Differences, than it was then in the Points here refer'd to, that the Truth, in the Matters contested, is, and can be but on one side only; There must be necessarily a Mistake either on the one, or on the other Hand: And tho' in that Age, the Church had the Advantage both of this Apostle, and of several other inspired Persons, to decide the Case by Authority from Heaven, without the least Danger of a Mistake; yet we do not find it determin'd, for either of the contending Parties against the other. The Apostle does not here enter into a distinct and labour'd Consideration of the disputed Points; he does not say who is in the Right, and who under a Mistake; much less does he take Pains with the mistaken Party to convince him of his Error, and to bring all to one fixed and unalterable Rule of *Uniformity*; but, instead of that, he does most plainly seem to indulge and connive at, if not to allow the Difference, the diverse Sentiments and Practices on both Sides. He does not lay it as a Law upon the Christian World, that they agree entirely in that which is the Truth in these lesser Things; he does not charge and require, that every one should unfeignedly Assent and Consent to such a certain Opinion, or Practice; but, says he, *Let every one be fully perswaded in his own Mind*, let every one act as to these things with a sort of *Plerophory*, with such a Temper of Spirit that he may be able boldly, and with Confidence, to look God in the Face. I look upon that to be in great Part, if not the whole, and only Sense and signification of that Word. Not that every one should be able to clear up the Controversie on his own Side, to clear up the Principles upon which he acts,

to maintain them in a set and formal Disputation against such as are otherwise-minded ; but be sure, that every one of you act like honest men, with a good Conscience ; be true to the Light given in to you ; see that you be not Self-condemn'd in your own minds and Consciences in what you do ; be sure, you be able at all Times to look up to God, in whatsoever part you take in these Cases ; that you be able to say, ' Lord, my own Heart Testifies for me, and ' thou art my Witness, that I do herein desire to do ' whatsoever is pleasing to thee, and what to the best ' of my Understanding, I take to be thy Mind and ' Will. This is the unalterable Law he has left to the Church of Christ in all Ages and Generations, in such Contests as these are ; not that every one must be of the same Mind, but that every one should act with an honest Mind, and with a good Conscience towards God in what he does, as you have it in the Close of *Ver. 5*. He does not lay it as a Law upon all the Christian World, that they intirely agree in one establish'd Way, as to such Things as these ; he does not direct or allow, that there be Laws made to pale in the Church, within such a Compass, and all Capacities of Service to the Church, and all Advantages from it, within the Compass of those that are just of such a Mind and Measure, as the prevailing Party happen to agree in : That there shall be none allow'd to Worship together, but those that are entirely agreed in such Things as these. No, he does not admit of, or give Encouragement to such Practices as these, even towards the mistaken Side : So far from it, that he does expressly require and enjoin them, that the *Weak* and *Mistaken Brethren*, should yet be owned and received as *Brethren*. And instead of deciding the Controversie, he discountenances their further Contests about it, and plainly signifies, that he had rather such Points as these should still continue *doubtful*, than that they should hazard the Lots of all their Charity, in their too eager Searches after Truth. He therefore forbears

bears to say, whether the one or the other Side were in the Right, and only advises them to act Honestly according to the Light they have, and on both Sides to approve themselves to God and their own Consciences. And that which conformably hereto, we ought to think and say, is ; I am not concerned whether others be of my Mind or not ; I am not to answer for them to God ; I am only accountable for my own Sentiments, and correspondent Practices ; and others that have Sentiments differing from mine, may be as Wise, as Honest, as good every Way, as Faithful to God, and as Useful to Men ; nay, possibly they may be in the Right, and I mistaken. And tho' the Truth be on my Side, and they under a Mistake, yet all the rest I have said before, may be true of them.

Now then, what a peaceful Blessed State would such a Temper of Spirit as this introduce among Men, might it but be allow'd to take Place ; if every one were of the Mind that the Apostle here does industriously seek to propagate ! What a happy World would this be ! Here would be no biting, no tearing and devouring one another : Here would be no cunning little Methods and Arts used to undermine, to supplant, to ruin and destroy one another, to sink the Reputation of one Party, and set up another. We should have nothing of this kind, known or heard of among us ; but every one would consult his Neighbour's Good. We should *not look upon* our own Things only, but every one also on the Things of others. We should *not seek our own Things, but the Things which are Jesus Christ's* : Every one would rejoice in the Light, the Grace, the Wisdom and the Success of others ; every one would study to strengthen each others Hands, to encourage and bear up each others Hearts, and join their united Strength and Labours together, if by any Means the Interest of Christ might be promoted. There would be no mutual Jealousies, Envyings, evil Surmises, Suspicions and hard Thoughts of, or bitter Reflections upon one another ; But each would.

(as the Rule of the Gospel requires) *esteem others better than themselves and in Honour prefer one another*, and every one would strive to exceed each other in the Exercise of most warm and fervent Charity among themselves.

And this I look upon to be, among others, a bright and convincing Evidence, that the Christian Institution is from Heaven, for that it has its direct Tendency thither-ward; and that while we are yet but on our Way thither, it would (might it but duly influence and govern us) so far make this Earth to resemble Heaven.

And the Apostle doth not satisfy himself barely to lay down this as a Rule, but also proceeds to urge and press it upon us from such Considerations as these.

1. That we have no competent Authority to impose our Judgment upon others, *Ver. 4. Who art thou*, says he, *that judgest anothers Servant?* You don't consider, those Persons, to whom you prescribe, and upon whom you would impose your Sentiments; they are none of *your Servants*, nor are you their Lord and Master. It is not in your Power to lay a Law upon their Minds and Consciences; nay, so far from it, that they are themselves precluded by a Divine Law in the Case, that they cannot allow you to be their Master, *Call no Man Master or Father upon Earth, Mat. XXIII. 8, 9, 10.* It's plainly intended with reference to such Things as these. Don't you take the Mind, the Judgment of any Man upon Earth, to be a Rule or Measure for your Minds and Consciences: Don't you therefore agree to any Doctrine or Practice, because it is their Mind. This is the reserved Prerogative of him that is *your Master*, One is your Master, *even Christ*. It is enough for you, that you must immediately fall in with what appears to be his Mind; but let not any one share with him in this Honour, that you owe entirely, and only to him.

2. He further presses it from this Consideration, that tho' our Apprehensions differ about lesser Things, yet in the greatest ones, we are agreed. For this is supposed

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posed in the Case, that they are Christians on both sides, and that even, as to the very Points wherein they differ, yet, according to the best of their Judgment, they are pursuing what they take to be the Mind of Christ, and are sincerely endeavouring to please and approve themselves to him: For this is plainly the Meaning of the Text, *He that regards a Day, regards it to the Lord; and he that regards not the Day to the Lord he does not regard it.* They are on both sides agreed to Act with a most sincere conscientious Regard to God and the Redeemer: They are on both sides solicitous to understand the Mind of Christ, to fall in with that, and to approve themselves to him in the Matter. Therefore, wherein his Mind is plain and clear, as it is always in Things of greatest Importance (and such, upon which our Salvation does depend) there they are all, and cannot but be agreed. And is it fit that we should contend with each other in our way to Heaven; that we should despise, judge, censure, hate, fly from one another, on account of such trivial Things, when there are so much more strong and powerful Bands of Love that Christ has laid upon us; and such a Spirit in both, as does naturally incline us to unite most intimately one with another? Whence it follows.

3. That they are on both sides, (they that *eat all Things*, and they that *eat only Herbs*; they that *regard a Day*, and they that *regard it not*) accepted of God: *He has received them. v. 3.* There are some of each sort, all the sincere, all the truly pious among them, (however they differ in their Sentiments about these things) are accepted with God. The Differences on which they are too apt to over-value themselves, and despise others, are what our Great Lord lays no stress upon; they will no way influence the Judgment of Christ concerning them. *Conformists* and *Non-Conformists*, if they be truly serious and devoted to him, he does and will equal receive; as he did the Jewish and the Gentile Christian of Old, whose Differences were not only equal to, but greater than ours: And what, shall

shall we not receive one another? Shall we judge, or despise, and contend with one another, so as that one House, one Church, shall not be able to hold us, when we are sure, that one Heaven must at last? Shall not we, when we come thither, be ashamed of our unnatural Heats and Contentions, when we see our Heavenly Father, and our dear Redeemer, how they have covered our mutual Infirmities, and how kindly we are accepted of them? Shall we not, I say, be ashamed then of our Anger and Uncharitableness, of our imposing and irreconcilable Spirit that we bore towards each other, while we were yet on the way thither? From such Considerations as these, does the Apostle press and propagate a right Christian Temper, a Spirit of Union and *Moderation* among Christians.

But after all, this may seem not so well to consist with what the Apostle says to the Judaizing *Galatians*, in that Epistle, *Chap. IV. Verse 10, 11.* And some may from thence be ready to Object. Here indeed he allows, That *he that regards a Day, regards it to the Lord; and he that regards not the Day, to the Lord he does not regard it; And bids 'em receive one another, and be fully perswaded in their own Minds, every one act according to his own Sense and Sentiments.* But, in that other Place, he Censures the one sort with great Severity on this Account; *ye Observe, says he, Days, and Months, and Times, and Years, I am afraid of you lest I have bestowed on you Labour in Vain.* The Tide seems to be strangely turn'd; just now he said, *let every one be fully perswaded in his own Mind, let him that regards a Day regard it to the Lord,* and he is not to be blamed for so doing. But here he reproaches them for Observing Times, and Years, and Days, and Months. How can these Texts Consist? We may suppose, that they did it to the Lord, as he Intimates they should; and yet he suspects their State, and suggests his Fears concerning 'em, as if all his former Labours among them had been lost; and Speaks very hard Things upon this Account, and Charges 'em as if they were turned away

way to another Gospel, Gal. I. 6. And declares, that *Christ was like to Profit them Nothing*. Where now is all the Moderation so warmly recommended and pret's'd before! Besides, it seems a direct Inconsistency and Contradiction; at one Time he seems to allow them that were satisfied, to observe Days, and Months, and Years, and at another Time, he seems to Charge them upon using their Liberty, as if they were Apostates from Christ, and Christianity, as if they had turn'd away to another Gospel, renounced the very Christian Name and Profession; and as if there were no Hope in their Case, that they were ever like to go to Heaven.

But after all, if we will but distinguish differing Cases, the Matter will be very Clear. Particularly, do but consider, That in the *one Place* he allows, at least con-
 nives at their observing the Days appointed under the Law, as it was practis'd by the Believing *Jews*, of which there were many then in the Imperial City of *Rome*; there were Multitudes of *Jews*, born such, that were converted to Christianity, who were not thereupon immediately satisfied, that they were to lay aside, to cease from all their Old Customs, Rites and Ceremonies, in which they had been train'd up to that very Day; they knew they once had the Stamp of Divine Authority, and they did not know that this was taken off; and therefore they were honestly Desirous and Willing, even in the Observation of these Things, to approve their Hearts to God, and they were not so forward to condemn the *Gentiles* that had never used these Things; these he does therefore indulge and Countenance. But in that *other Epistle*, he condemns that Practice of observing Days and Times, and Months, and Years, as it was taken up by *Gentiles* who had no pretence in the World that ever they were under any Obligation to do so, who had never been trained up to it, nor oblig'd to do it. He makes great Allowances for the Prejudices of Education, and long Custom, in the one, but it was a perfect Innovation in the other Case. In the one Case, he considers 'em as coming off from *Judaism* to *Christi-*
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anity, and therefore allows 'em Gradually to take leave of what they had been accustom'd to. In the other Case, he finds *Gentile Christians* turning their Backs upon the Simplicity of the Gospel, debasing the Purity, if not destroying altogether the Power of Christianity, and bringing in all that Heap of *Jewish Rubbish*, which the Redeemer had now order'd to be thrown out of the Church. And if this be not enough, it may be further added, that in the *one Case*, he considers this observing Days, Months, Years, or Weeks, meerly as the *Practice* of these Persons; in the *other Case*, he considers it as taken up with a design to *impose*, and lay it as a *Law* upon the whole Christian Church. The *Jewish Christians* at *Rome* were willing to continue their own Practice, without censuring others; but the Apostatizing *Galatians* (who were Originally *Gentiles*) were revolted into *Judaism*, or at least fairly upon their Way thither, and were for laying Loads upon their Brethren; according to them, this must be observ'd, as that without which, there could be no Justification, no Acceptance of their Persons, no Salvation to be had. And therefore the Apostle, consonantly to such Principles of theirs, speaks of them as if they did expect to be justified by these Works of the Law, *Gal. V. 4. Whosoever of you are justified by the Law ye are fallen from Grace.* They agreed with those false Teachers, mention'd *Acts XV. 1. 5.* Who went up and down endeavouring to propagate this, (for, and instead of the Gospel,) that *except Men be circumcised, and observe the Days, Months, Years, perscribed in the Mosaical Law; and unless they abstain from Meats therein forbidden, and observe all the Customs, Rites and Ceremonies thereby appointed, they cannot be saved.* This, says he, is another Gospel. When you set up these Things in Conjunction with Christ, much more when you put 'em in his stead; ye are fallen from the Grace of the Gospel with a Witness. What, does Christ's coming stand for nothing with you? Is the Church still really in the same State, as it was before he came? And are these Rituals to be now set up

up in Opposition to him, which before his Coming, while they were allowed, were to be used as a *Pedagogue* to lead us to Christ; to carry the Mind and Faith of the believing *Jews* to the promised and expected Redeemer. Now, this therefore is to be consider'd, There is a vast Difference between a *meer Practising* such Things as these, upon a mistaken Judgment, for the satisfying our own Minds; and the setting up our own as the *Measure and Standard* of all other Minds: 'Tis *one Thing*, peaceably to enjoy and follow our own Opinion; and *another Thing* to Abridge others of their Liberty: *One Thing*, modestly to Judge and Chuse for our selves; *another*, to Prescribe to others, and presume to Judge for all the World, as if no one was a Christian, or accepted of God, or in a State of Salvation, but they who are just of our Mind; as if all were damn'd *Schismatics* and *Hereticks*, and must perish everlastingly, who do not come up to our Measure.

This is the Spirit the Apostle here does so warmly inveigh against; 'tis with an Eye to this, That he with such Concern tells 'em, *I am afraid of you, that I have labour'd among you in Vain*. You pretend to set up these Things as a Standard and Measure to all Mankind, and press 'em, as if their everlasting State did depend upon 'em; when it is plain, that herein you are under a Mistake; can you not be contented your selves to Practice upon your own mistaken Judgment, but you must set up your selves as a Standard to all the World about you; and no Man must be allow'd to share in the Divine Favour, unless he is of your mistaken Judgment? *I am afraid of you, that I labour'd among you in Vain*: I am afraid the Gospel has never had any Influence upon you, never has taken hold of your Spirits; so that still, that which seems to be an Inconsistency with this Context, does only tend to illustrate, and add the clearer Light to it, when it is rightly understood.

I have been so long upon the Context, that I have but little room to give you what I have to say, particularly upon the Text. But it is so Necessary at all Times,

Times, and especially so seasonable in this Age and Day that I hope you will not reckon we have been mispending the Time, in what has been said hitherto.

And thus far we have consider'd the Words *relatively*, as they respect the foregoing Context, and suggest to us this Truth, *That such as are serious Christians and do Act with a Conscientious Regard to the Lord, and Care to please Him, may in their Principles and Practices about lesser Things, be directly opposite and contrary to one another.* One is for regarding a Day, another not for regarding it. One thinks it highly Necessary and Useful, whereas the other thinks it Needless and Superstitious. One regards a Day, and the other avoids all Appearance of regarding it; and yet they are honest and pious, conscientious, and serious Christians on both Sides. And this we have touch'd upon in Order to promote *Moderation* among Christians.

But if we consider the Words more *abstractly*, they will also serve to promote *Piety*, as they may afford us this Point, (which I chuse to spend our remaining Time upon) Namely,

That even in so low, and little Things, as the observing, or not observing a Day, a Common-Day, those that are of a right Christian Spirit, will be acted with regards to God, and the Redeemer. For this must be fundamentally suppos'd, in order to what the Apostle says; *he that regards a Day, to the Lord he does regards it*: I take it for granted, that the Context speaks of *Common-Days*, that really were so, whatsoever Sacredness some Mens mistaken Judgment might have Stamp'd upon them; 'tis plain, the Fasts and Feasts appointed by the *Jewish* Law were hereby intended: The Obligation to observe which, was now abrogated and disannul'd, and thereupon they were return'd to the Rank of *Common-Days*; yet, if any real Christian would still regard them to the Lord, he does not disallow of it: Whether they did regard or not regard 'em, he is not so much concern'd, as that it may be unto the Lord.

Therefore,

Therefore, now to bring the Matter to *this Day*, this very Day : Some perhaps may expect I should deliver my Thoughts, whether this is a Day to be regarded, or not to be regarded ; whether it is really the Day that the Name commonly put upon it, does Import ; whether it is Lawful to regard it, or whether it be Sinful and Superstitious. Doubtless, even in this very Point, and such Questions as these, the Truth lies but on one Side ; yet according to the Rule of the Apostle, I think it better to leave this still, a *Doubtful Thing*, if it be so with any of you ; and rather chuse to employ my own Time, and your's, upon what is of greater Importance, than the determining such disputed Matters either Way. If I can but effectually learn my self, and teach you, how to sanctifie even our *Common Time* to the Lord, and to regard a Day, any, every Day to him, I am sure we shall have no Reason to reckon we have been mis-apylying, or mispending our Time upon this Day. And I had rather the Labour of this Hour should contribute something to your real Service all your Days, than that a meer Curiosity should be gratified as to one or other particular Day. And therefore, the Remainder of the Time we are together, shall be employ'd, in shewing,

How we are to regard a Day unto the Lord,

And to press it from some proper moving Considerations.

I. How are we to regard a Day unto the Lord, or when may we be said to do it ? And here I would not be understood to speak of the *Lord's Day*, and the peculiar Services he himself hath directed and prescribed for the sanctifying that Day, which he hath claim'd as his own, and distinguish'd from all other Days : But I speak of every, or any other *Common-Day*, whether Men call it Holy or not, whether we think it so or not, how we may yet regard it to the Lord. And,

1. Then do we *regard our Days to the Lord*, when we do not suffer any Day to pass over us, wherein he is forgotten by us. We cannot be truly said to regard any Day to the Lord, if we don't remember him upon it.

it. They were a sort of Persons without God in the World, *Wicked Men*, of whom we are told, *That through the Pride of their Countenance they would not seek after God, God was not in all their Thoughts*, Psal. X. 4. They had no Regard to him one Day or other: Whatever Concerns they had to mind, they did no way concern him in them, nor commend them to his Direction or Blessing. They neither thought of their Dependance on him, nor his Propriety in, and Sovereignty over them, nor what they had to do for him, nor what Account they were like to give of themselves to him. But on the contrary, good Men are Characteriz'd by their *thinking on his Name*, They that feared the Lord, and *thought upon his Name*, Mal. III. 16. Christians that regard their Days unto the Lord, they will have their stated Times at least once, or oftener, every Day, in which to retire for serious Thoughts of God, and Converse with him; they will have him and his Name remembered in the Houses and Habitations where they dwell.

2. 'Tis not enough that we think of the Lord every Day, but we should think of him according to the Discoveries and Revelations of the Gospel, otherwise we do not think on him aright. This Term [*the Lord*] does in the *New Testament* peculiarly signify the Lord Christ, in whose Hand God has intrusted the whole Affair of our Recovery and Salvation: We can expect no Mercy from God, but what he has obtain'd, and sues out for us; nor are we allow'd to offer any Services to God, in any other Name but his; and should any Day pass over us, wherein our Lord Jesus is disregarded and forgotten by us! We are required to *live unto him*, and *to live the Life we live in the Flesh by the Faith of him*, and how can this be done without *looking unto Jesus*. Think of him who is our Lord, every Day let him have some room in your Thoughts; let your Thoughts be enlarg'd to take in (as you can) the whole Compass of his Mediatorial Work; let his Incarnation and Nativity, his Life, his Sufferings, his Resurrection

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Resurrection, Ascension into Glory, and his Sitting at the Right Hand of the Father, be daily thought of by you : Every Day remember that this Lord is the constant Witness of what you do : That his Eyes are as a Flame of Fire ; *That his Eyes behold, and his Eye-Lids try the Children of Men* ; That this Lord is your Judge, your King and Lawgiver, that one Lawgiver, who is able to Save and to Destroy ; That he is the great Prophet and Teacher of his Church, whom we are bound to hear, and the High-Priest of our Profession, who by one Offering has for ever perfected them that are sanctified ; That he is our only Advocate with the Father, who does now appear in the Presence of God for us, and ever lives to make Intercession. And in the

3. Place, our Thoughts of him ought not to be Slight and Superficial, but most deeply inward and serious Thoughts, such as may Tincture our very Spirits, and form our Minds, so as we may retain the Sense and Savour of them throughout the whole Day. We cannot indeed be actually thinking of our Lord every Hour, and Moment of the Day ; but we may, and ought to Act and Behave our selves always, and at all Times, as if we thought of him : And this is the Meaning of those Texts, where we are injoin'd to be *in the Fear of the Lord all the Day long*, and to *set the Lord always before us*. We should begin the Day with God, our first and most early Thoughts should be of him ; nor should we satisfy our selves with any kind of Thoughts, tho' never so Loose or Careless, tho' they have never so little Power and Influence upon us ; but we should go on to think, and engage our Minds with intenseness upon such Thoughts, till we find they have reach'd our very Spirits, and left a serious Savour there ; so as that when we go into the World, into whatever Company, engage in whatever Affair, these Thoughts may still have an Influence upon Us, and we not be prevail'd upon to act otherwise, than as if he were actually thought of, and remembred by Us. It is not enough, as has been intimated to you upon another

ther Occasion elsewhere, that we should every Day remember the Lord, only while we are upon our Knees; but our Regards to him, should accompany us in all our Conferences with Men, and in the Management of all our worldly Affairs. In our lowest and most common Concerns, even in the directing and regulating our very Recreations, Visits, Entertainments, we ought not altogether to leave out Regards to the Lord: All Occurrences of Providence through the Day, we should entertain as order'd and over-rul'd by him: We should eye him in all the Relations we stand in to one another: All the Trusts he commits to us, we should discharge with a conscientious and faithful Regard to him. Religion should run through all we do. *Whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we are to do all to the Glory of God,* 1 Cor. X. 31. The Apostle John mentions an Instance, than which there is hardly any thing of which it could be less imagin'd, that Religion could be found in it, 'tis the meer Civility of bringing a Friend upon his Way in a Journey; and yet he speaks of it in such a Manner, as plainly signifies that a religious Regard to the Lord ought not to be left out there, 3 John, Ver. 6. *Whom (says he) if thou bring forward on their Journey after a Godly Sort, thou shalt do well.* Even such a civil Act as this we are to do *after a Godly Sort.* Religion is not even here, to be wholly laid aside. Herein you are to act with Sincerity, with a Heart full of Love to God, and to good Men for his Sake. Mix Religion with your Civilities, that you would shew to your Friends; this is that which I would therefore press and perswade you to, in every thing to shew a serious Regard to the Lord from Day to Day; so would you find, or make every Day a Holy Day (in a very good Sense) to God, and a Profitable and Pleasant Day to your selves.

II. And to perswade you to this, let me press you seriously to consider the following Particulars.

1. Is not he *the Lord of every Day*? He is the Lord of our Lives, and all our Time, every Part of it is in

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his Hands ; he it is that has the Disposal of All. Had you ever any one Day in your Lives, that he did not give you? And has he given you any Day which he did not give you for himself, and which you are not accountable to him for? Is there any one Day he will leave out of your final reckoning? If there were, then you would have a Day wherein you would not need to regard him. And,

2. Have you not *daily need of him*? Do you not need his Presence to revive you, his Strength to support you, his Light to guide you, his Grace to pardon you, his Spirit to quicken and sanctifie you, and subdue your Corruptions for you? Don't you need him in all Parts and Instances of the spiritual Life every Day? Nay, don't you need him also for the Purposes of your Natural Life? Can you do any Thing without him? Can you Live, Move, Breath, or have your Being, without him? Can you Speak, Converſe, Walk about and Transact your Affairs, without him? Can you employ your Thoughts to contrive or carry on your common Concerns in the World, if he should suspend his Influence for any Day, or any small Part of the Day? And will you not regard every Day to him?

3. Is not *the Lord* daily expecting, and waiting for your Regards? This Name [*Lord*] may be understood either of God or Christ: But here I speak more particularly of Christ, who (as I said before) is more expressly intended here by the Word *Lord*. Is he not willing to be employed by you? Does not he tell you, he is *now*, always, every Day, continually *appearing in the Presence of God for you*? Heb. IX. 24. To what Purpose is that signified to us, if he would not have us to make Use of him? And we are told, That he *Lives on Purpose, continually, to make Intercession for us*, Heb. VII. 25. And can there be more egregious Contempt pour'd upon him, or a greater Injury done to him, than to suffer one Day after another to pass over us, without any Regard to him, no Request put up to him, no Trust repos'd in him, no Dependance Ex-

exercised upon him, no Expectations of any good from him, no Notice at all taken of him, no looking unto Jesus; and he all the while waiting when we will look up, and remember him, when we will employ him in his proper Place and Work? But again,

4. This Duty of regarding and remembering the Lord, from Day to Day; is it not what your *Baptismal Covenant binds you to*? Is not this to live like Christians? To live *unto the Lord*? Is not this Necessary to enable you to say *to us to live is Christ*? Is not this to *live by Faith*, to live the Life you live in the Flesh by the Faith of the Son of God? For that cannot surely mean that you barely once in a Week, or Month, or no one knows how long a Time, live to him, or make Use of him, and seriously think of your Concerns that lye in his Hands; but it is to do it every Day. You may as well imagine a Man may live without Breathing: Can his Natural Life continue a Day without Breathing? No more can his Spiritual Life be maintained without looking to Jesus, and sending up the Breathing of his Soul Heaven-ward. It's true, we can hold our Natural Breath for a short Time, and yet live, and it is not Necessary that we should be actually Breathing Heaven-ward every Moment; but, a Living to the Lord must needs carry in it a frequent repeated Act of that Kind. In short, this is to be religious indeed; and where it is not thus, where this is not endeavoured after, where Religion is not made our every Days Work, I am afraid it is little more than a Name, a Life-less Shadow and Appearance. Again,

5. It would also make *Religion Shine*; if Christians would but thus regard every Day to the Lord. There are those to whom the Plainness and Simplicity of the Gospel-Institution is no Way agreeable; and who therefore put upon it Ornaments of their own devising. But after all, there is no real Glory or Beauty in Religion, but what God has put upon it; all Humane Additions are but as Paint upon a Comely Countenance, which does only tend to Debase and destroy it; it shines best and brightest in its Native Beauties: And the true Reason why of later

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Years it has made so little a Figure in the World, is, because there has been so great a fondness for the Splendor and Gaiety with which Men themselves have dress'd it up, and so few have liv'd under the Governing Power of it as Christ has left it. Practical Godliness has an awful Gravity in it, which is of it self Sufficient to command Respect: It needs only to shew it self, to appear in the World as it came from Heaven: And this is what I am pressing to. Do you take Care that it be seen in your *Daily*, and continu'd Course, live like Christians, and do not meerly Pray like such: Do not confine your Religion to your Closets, Families, or even to the Publick Forms and Times of Worship; but let it Influence your whole Conversation, and be brought forth to the View of all the World, *let your Light shine before Men, &c.* Mat. V. 16. This may caule its Innocence, its Usefulness, and its Pleasantness to appear to the Conviction of its Enemies, that all may see and own it to be of God, to have an Heavenly extract and Original. And further,

6. This will also tend to *spread Christianity* in the World. Nothing will so much Contribute to its Growth and Progress, and make it meet with so ready and general Acceptance and Entertainment in every Heart and Conscience. They that cannot yet love the Austerities of Religion for themselves, will however approve of them in others: And you will have a Witness in their Consciences, that this serious universal Holiness is according to the Mind of God, and that it will never be well with them, till they grow up to it: Yet again,

7. This will make *Religion last*, and secure it, to after Ages and Generations, Your Posterity, the Families that descend from you, and are rising up in your Place and Stead, will by this Means be most likely to be impress'd with a Saviour and Love of serious Godliness: Which consequently will be transmitted from Generation to Generation. And can you be content that Religion should die out of your Families

Families with you? Have you no Concern for the Interest of Christ, what becomes of it after your own Time? And whence is it, that so many that have been religiously educated, and have learnt so much of the Form of Christianity as to be able to make a Show of Religion, while their pious Ancestors were alive, have deserted their Profession so soon as ever they were Dead? Is it not from this, that they never felt any thing of the Power of Religion in themselves: Too little perhaps of universal Godliness appear'd in those that went before them: They could not know what pass'd between God and their Religious Parents in Secret, and for Publick Worship they reckon'd it meer Matter of Form, and consequently not worth the continuing any longer, than they could make their Interest that Way.

And in short, till Religion be wrought into our Conversation, it will not appear to have any thing of Reality in it, and no Wonder then that every Age the Profession and Shew of it grows less and less till it utterly disappear and be Extinct. If therefore you have any Concern for the Name of God and Christ, that that should live and be continu'd in the World; if you have any Regard to your own Families and Posterity, that they may be the Lords, and be faithful to him in their Day and Generation: In short, if you would not that Christianity it self should expire with the present Age, see that you thus adorn your Profession, exemplify and shew its universal Influence. And,

Lastly, Thus also may you *comfortably review your past Time* and Life, when your Days are drawing to a Close, and the final Reckoning does approach. And believe it, we shall need all the Supports that can be had at such a Time, and shall find all little enough for us To give up our departing Souls with our dying Breath, to lay down our Heads in the Dust, to break away from all our most affectionate Relations, our faithful Friends, and most delightful Enjoyments, to leave them all at once behind us, never to see, or return to them any more; to be sum-

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mon'd before the Bar of God, and in the Presence of that dreadful Majesty, to give an Account of our selves, of our whole Time, and of all our Talents with which we have been intrusted, and what Improvement we have made of all. This is new and strange Work to us, what we have never yet done, but 'tis what we must ere long do: And how will you ever be able to go through with it? You will plead, it may be, your Profession of his Name, your attending upon Ordinances, &c. But what will this avail you, if in your daily Course you have liv'd without him in the World, *Mat. VII. 21, 22, 23. Luk. XIII. 25, 26, 27.* Or if you plead the Righteousness and Merits of Christ, that you trust in him, and depend upon him alone for Salvation, do you think a *L O R D* whom you have all along neglected and disregarded from Day to Day will be your Saviour! But the Joys and Pleasures of the Holy faithful Soul, whose whole Life has been a living to God, will be then Unspeakable. He that can truly say, 'Lord, my whole Life and Time has been devoted to thee, *to me to live was Christ*, ever since I seriously enter'd into Covenant with thee. And (unallow'd Infirmities excepted) not a Day hath passed, wherein I have not walked with thee. With what inward Satisfaction and Joy, under the sensible Approaches of Death, may such an one look up and say, as *Hezekiah* did, *Remember now O Lord, how I have walked before thee in Truth, and with a perfect Heart.* Such an one may not only submit to die, but with Pleasure think, that his Days are at End, and that the Times of his Recompence and Refreshing are come. How joyfully does he wait for the kind Sentence of his Lord, who will accept his weak Endeavours, excuse and pardon his many Neglects, and the Mixtures of Corruption that have attended his best Services, and will assuredly pronounce in his Case, *Well done, good and faithful Servant, enter thou into the Joy of thy Lord.* Thus will God at *that Day* remember and gloriously recompence the steady, the sincere and faithful Regards, we have shewn to him; his Interest and Name in our *present Day*.

F I N I S.

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